Mid - Florida Atari Computer Club Bulletin

August, 1994

Vol. 11, No. 8

This is the monthly bulletin of the Mid-Florida Atari Computer Club. In it are articles written or submitted by members who feel they are of interest to all users of Atari computers.

You may wish to join a computer club to share the beneficial aspects of having others around you who have similar machines, like interests, and a desire to share what they know with others. A users group can help you understand things about your computer that they have already discovered.

Our membership, at $12.00 per year, entitles you to the newsletter, access to the disk libraries, and club meetings where all the fun and education happen on a monthly basis.

We meet in the Orlando Library building downtown Orlando, 101 E Central Blvd. At 1:30PM on the second Sunday of each month. Feel free to join us there next month to learn more about the wonderful world of computers, and Atari computers in particular.

For Newsletter Exchange

M.F.A.C.C.
C/O Bob Smith
3729 Yosemite Dr.
Orlando, FL 32818

M.F.A.C.C. Affiliated BBS Listing:

Top Gun	381-5403
Starbase 1	381-2610
Inner Core	294-5183

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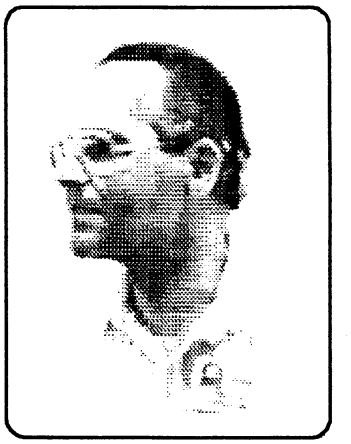
Mid-Florida Atari Computer Club

From The President



Our president has been on a mission of NATIONAL security. And has had no time to complete his message.

Minutes Of The M.F.A.C.C. General Meeting

July 1994

MFACC Meeting Notes
July 10,1994

Meeting Starts - 1:32pm

Old Business
- Morrisons computer message base goes national! Messages pour in from as far away as Nomb, Alaska. Soon, he will be providing the BBS with a store inventory.

- The new membership list was passed out to the members in attendance. They were instructed to view it for correctness.

- A new BBS is rapidly coming into existence. Cary Sparks is creating a BBS for Midi issues, centered around Atari stuff. Currently, it is fully active except for the message bases.

- Bill Baker read the treasure's report. We have decided to keep our Sun Bank account for now. Currently, our balance stands at $842.52.

New Business

- James Peach, a long-time 8-bitter, has returned to the club and 8-bitting.

- Its the 25th Anniversary of the Moon landing, and next month's demos are promised to be as awe-inspiring. 8 and 16 bits - something for everyone.

- Bill Barker discusses Rich Sava's loss. Mentions that he would like to trade his 1040 and a 520 for the club's 1 meg 520. However, we will lose our monitor ability if we do. Gary Sparks mentioned that he might put his own machine into this crazy mix. Bill Baker will look into this further. The members supported this.

Meeting Ends - 1:57

Some phone numbers you will need to communicate with our club:

President:
Bob Smith ☛ 299-5374

Vice-President:
John Baker ☛ 823-9705

Treasurer:
Bill Baker ☛ 277-3438

Secretary:
Robert Raymond ☛ 896-7404

Librarians:
8-Bit:
Arthur Averett 290-2096

ST:
Rick Sava ☛ 574-6033

Publicity:
Jim Porter ☛ 695-1467

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Treasurer's Report
July, 1994

Opening balance of	584.52
Deposit	314.00
Debit	59.75
Service Charge	13.16
Closing balance	825.61

Birthdays for August

Bill Baker

All welcomed as new members.

COMING EVENTS

FOR SALE

3 single density drives complete $10 each
Large selection of new & used software, games utilities etc. Start mags with disks $1 each.
SM124 St monochrome monitor $75
See Bob Smith or call 299-5374

Why I Came Back To The Atari

by James Peach

I purchased an Atari 130XE along with a 1010 data recorder in 1985. Later in the year I made the purchase of a 1050 disk drive for $200. The 8-bit system thus described provided me with over 4 years of entertainment and productivity. In 1989 I moved up to an Atari 520ST that I soon expanded to a Meg of memory. I was forced to sell the 8-bit system because of economic reasons (i.e. I needed the money to help finance the purchase), plus my wife didn't see the need to own 2 computers.

In 2 years, in a fit of insanity, I sold my ST to finance the purchase of an IBM compatible. I never forgot my 8-bit system and longed for some of its programs that simply were not available on either the ST or the IBM. Recently I had the opportunity to buy a 800XL with a 1050 along with some of my original programs. Since the price was right ($45), I quickly jumped at the chance.

The Atari 8-bit systems, along with the Apple 2 (ugh) and the Commadore 64 (double ugh), are considered 'classic' computers. Caught between the age of CPM and IBM, these systems are capture a unique age in computer technology. I feel that in time these systems may be worth more then they are now, both in terms of value and historical interest. Unlike the Mac and IBM compatibles of today, with their bloated program code, these classic computers were very efficient. They had to be. With an 8-bit chip (the 6502) that could only address 64K, programers had to get the very best product in the least amount of program code. There is still a wealth of software (although all old) for the 8-bit systems at yard sales, etc. Yes, there still are companies that support the 8-bit Atari but you must do a little research and correspondence.

The Atari 8-bits today truely represent the concept of "Power without the price". You can get whole systems for $20 to $40 that can still do what the same system costing $500+ did 8-9 years ago. Why even today an IBM compatible with an anemic CGA video system will run you over $100! Try to run the latest software on that piece of dog droppings. Like I thought years ago, an Atari 8-bit is head and shoulders above the bottom end clones (hey we're not talking 386s or better with VGAs here).

I have a special affinity for the Atari 8-bits. After all it was my first personal computer. I remember a time when I went into a Playworld here in Orlando and asked if they had more programs for the 8-bits then was displayed. The salesman (I use the term loosely) told me that I ought to get a 'real' computer like the Commadore 64 or IBM if I wanted more software! I was livid, my friend who was with me had to hold me back from punching the guy's lights out (this is going on in a toy store!). Needless to say, I did my shopping for toys for my kids elsewere that year (and every year since). It's like your kids, they may be ugly, but God forbid if anybody but you call them that.

You know, speaking of ugly and things ugly, there is a point I would like to bring out about the Atari and piracy. I feel the Atari was dumped on by the computer industry on the whole issue of piracy. Sure, piracy went on on Atari computer systems, but no more or no less then any other system around. Piracy is just as, if not more, rampant in the IBM world. We're not talking $30 games here Virginia, but $400 Word Processors and $3,000 CAD programs. But Atari was just a convenient target. After all, if everyone notices piracy on Atari computers, maybe they won't notice it on my Mac, Apple, IBM, Commadore, whatever.

Sure, the Atari 8-bit is outdated, but it can still give good service. I'm sick and tired of the computer industry (read Intel and others) telling me that my CPU isn't quick enough or my Hard Drive isn't big enough. This whole concept of techological obsolecense is merely a marketing ploy. If the computer will still do what you bought it for, then it still functions. At Orange County's EPD (Environmental Protection Department) they still use an old 1983 IBM XT. It still does what they want it to do, even in this day of Windows and Pentiums.

On a passing note, if no one (I mean the users) supports the Atari 8-bits (and ST's now), then a unique computer system will truely be lost to history. I'm really sorry I left the fold for a few years but I glad I'm back.

(Editor's note: It is with great pleasure that we welcome back this very fine member of the Mid-Florida Atari Computer Club. He has been away from the our Club for too long a period of time. Additionally, it is extremely encouraging to have this member make an immediate impact by this extremely well written article. His opinions are valued and while some may disagree, Jim makes some very valid points.

The staff of the newsletter extends a WELCOME HOME and WELL DONE to Sargent James Peach.)

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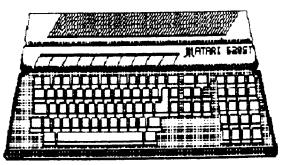
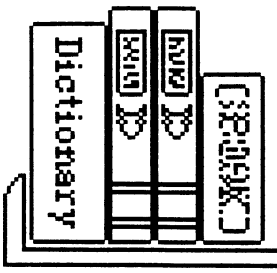


The Falcon has LANDED!!!



For Your Information

**** Atari Corp. Announces Second Quarter Results ****

Atari Corp. this week reported its financial results for the second quarter ended June 30, 1994.

Net Sales for the second quarter of 1994 were $8.2 million, a 43% increase over the sales for the second quarter of 1993 of $5.7 million. The increase in sales is mainly attributable to the sale of the Atari Jaguar 64-bit Interactive Multimedia System. Partially as a result of increased promotional and development expenses, the company incurred an Operating Loss of $3.9 million for the second quarter of 1994 as compared to an Operating Loss of $4.0 million for the same period of 1993. In addition, for the quarter ended 1994, the company experienced an exchange gain of $0.6 million, as compared to a $3.1 million loss on exchange for the same period in 1993. These exchange gains and losses together with other income and expense items resulted in a Net Loss of $3.4 million for the second quarter 1994 as compared to a Net Loss of $6.6 million for the same period of 1993.

Commenting on the report, Sam Tramiel, president, said, "We are focusing our efforts on having between ourselves and 3rd Party Publishers 30 to 50 titles available for the Jaguar during the Christmas selling season. We have recently commenced volume shipments of 'Wolfenstein 3-D'. Retail sales for this title are very encouraging."

**** CD-ROM Drive Sales Booming ****

Dataquest Inc. researchers say shipments of CD-ROM disk drives are soaring, spurred by increasing home PC sales and advances in computing power and software.

Analysts are quoted as saying worldwide shipments of CD-ROM drives will reach 17.5 million this year, far more than the 9.7 million shipped in all previous years.

Reports say, "By the end of this year, nearly 20% of the world's 122 million desktop PCs will have a CD-ROM drive.... The market took off last year when 6.7 million CD-ROM disk drives were shipped."

**** Sanyo to Offer High-End 3-D LCDs ****

Starting in November, Japan's Sanyo Electric Co. Ltd. is set to begin selling three-dimensional liquid crystal displays.

Reports say the screens -- developed by Sanyo, NHK Engineering Services Inc. and Toppan Printing Co. Ltd. -- "enable viewers to see three-dimensional images on LCDs without using special glasses."

The report adds, "Images from twin LCD projectors are separated into right- and left-side images with a special lens, resulting in three-dimensional perception."

But these aren't low-end devices. CI says 40- and 70-inch models will cost $50,000 and $98,000 respectively.

**** Multimedia Editor Ships ****

MediaStudio, a desktop video editor combined with a suite of integrated multimedia tools, is now shipping from Ulead Systems.

MediaStudio provides video capturing, video editing, audio editing, morphing, image editing, screen capture and visual management of media files.

Ulead notes that MediaStudio, users can effortlessly capture video, audio and still images from a variety of external sources such as VCRs, laser discs, camcorders, scanners and Photo CDs. Once captured, users can touch-up individual frames, edit images, add text and even morph images or video frames to create exciting special effects. MediaStudio also helps users create and edit the soundtrack for their production.

The product is provided on a Windows CD-ROM and includes over 400MB of clip media.

MediaStudio's suggested retail price is $349.

**** Kids Typing Software Offered ****

The Software Toolworks is adding a new title to its typing instruction software line.

Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing! For Kids is designed for children ages 4 to 8. The software publisher notes that the program features the young Mavis and her dog, Dizzy, set in the imaginative world of childhood.

The program progresses from letter recognition through basic typing and keyboarding skills, as young students participate in little Mavis' adventures and escapades.

Available on Windows floppy disk, Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing! For Kids has a suggested list price of $49.95.

**** Microsoft to Sell Mac Software ****

Microsoft Corp. will introduce versions of its Word, Office and PowerPoint software that will run on the new Power Macintosh PCs from

Continued next page ☞

Apple Computer Inc.

Reporting from Microsoft's headquarters, reports say Mac versions of the applications will be available early next month and the Power Mac versions will be available in October. Microsoft also said it will introduce versions of its Excel software for the Macintosh and Power Mac.

Microsoft Word 6.0 for the Macintosh and Power Macintosh, Excel 5.0 for the Macintosh and Power Macintosh and PowerPoint 4.0 for the Macintosh and Power Macintosh will each cost $339. (Current users can upgrade for $99, after a $30 rebate.) Microsoft Office 4.2 for Macintosh will cost $499, though current users can upgrade for $259 after a $40 rebate.

**** TI Offers New Laser Printer ****

Texas Instruments has announced a new a 600 dots-per-inch, 12 page-per-minute printer called the microLaser PowerPro, which includes a 25MHz RISC processor with 16K cache.

The $1,660 unit comes with 67 Adobe PostScript fonts, PCL 5 emulation, AppleTalk and high-speed parallel ports, 500-sheet paper capacity and 6MBmemory expandable to 22MB.

**** Hitachi to Boost Sega System ****

Sega Enterprises Ltd. will get assistance from Hitachi Sales Corp. in selling its 32-bit Saturn home video game machine, due to hit the market in November.

Hitachi Sales, an arm of electronics giant Hitachi Ltd., will set up a new firm, Hitachi Media Force, to market the Saturn. Officials say they expect the new company to sell more than a million units a year.

The Saturn, which is built around Hitachi Ltd.'s 32-bit microprocessor, was developed jointly by Sega, Hitachi Ltd., Victor Co. of Japan and Yamaha Corp.

**** Canon Offers Color Portables ****

The Innova Book 150C and 150OCT, Canon Computer Systems Inc.'s first 486DX2 color portable PC products, have been unveiled. The systems, which start at $2,399, offer built-in, multimedia-ready digital audio and enhanced graphic capabilities in a six-pound package, with passive dual scan color in the 150C and active matrix color in the 150CT.

**** Interactive TV Plan Predicted ****

Word is Macromedia Inc. and Microware Systems Corp. are set to announce technology to automate conversion of PC programs to run on interactive television networks.

The Wall Street Journal reports the technology could cut the time required to convert multimedia PC programs for use on the networks to about a month at a fraction of the cost (currently about $500,000).

Officials with Macromedia told the Journal the firm will start working with multimedia software developers next month to bring their CD-ROM programs to interactive television. The paper says Macromedia and Microware's partnership will finish by next March.

**** HP Cuts Vectra Line Prices ****

Prices on Hewlett-Packard Co.'s Pentium-based HP Vectra XU PCs have been cut by up to 15%. The firm also has cut prices on its AdvanceStack network hardware line by up to 35%.

In addition, HP has introduced two new HP Vectra PCs, including the HP Vectra XM2 PC series, a 486-based networking and graphics PC for corporate and advanced users, and three new HP Vectra VL2 PCs based on Intel's Pentium 60-MHz chip.

According to HP, the cause of the price cuts for the AdvanceStack hubs, switches, bridges and remote site routers, is due to HP passing on cost reductions resulting from improved manufacturing efficiencies and expanded use of ASIC technology to achieve tighter circuit integration.

Key Issues

"So, you wanna be a programmer..."

by Robert Raymond

So, you are a computer enthusiast, right? Wouldn't it be fun to program for money? To be able to be paid for something you enjoy? And the chicks for free?

Such words were spoken to me at lunch with my brother a few weeks ago. He is a borderline computer person, a tech-writer who programs C++ in his off hours in hopes of getting a 'real' computer job someday. He is envious of my job, which involves programming everything from 'C' to SQL (Structured Query Language). Upon return from lunch, enter the boss: "Raymond, you know that project that you are working on?" Oh, yeah, the one due in eight weeks, that is four weeks from completion. "The customer needs it in two."

Poof! That quickly, weekends vanish like sand in the wind. Free time becomes a thing of the past. The amount of caffeine in my blood is about to soar.

Programming. Within our lifetimes, a whole new world has opened up. Originally, in order to be able to apply knowledge and cleverness to what you did for a living, you had to have money to risk in various ways; the stock market, trade goods, and the like. Few could afford to gamble such amounts. But with the advent of the information age, people who (like myself) would have been lucky to be clerks or monks now issue instructions to machines that no one could have ever envisioned a generation ago. Code that I have written purrs though the electronic circuits of machines that I have never seen in hundreds of sites across the world. Hundreds of thousands of people have seen my displays, run my reports, and played my games.

But all coins have two sides...

Does anyone out there remember a certain IBM ad from a few years ago? The picture showed a wife in a bed, asleep. Moonlight, falling through the window, illuminates the other side of the bed, with sheets turned down, but otherwise, empty. I don't remember the words used for the ad, but in my opinion, the same ad could have read: "IBM, our managers can't schedule projects very well", or, "IBM: we are unreasonable at what we demand." Am I being critical? Perhaps. But tonight, when you turn out the lights and settle into sleep, think about this: somewhere, probably close by, there is a small room. The lighting is dim, the air stale. A man sits at a desk, festooned with code listings, coke cans, and (if he is lucky), an empty pizza box. His eyes are red from staring at computer screens for sixteen plus hours. His wife is asleep, as are his children, his boss, his end-users. At best, he can be viewed as the captain holding the night watch, providing a life for his family and income for his company. At worst, he is under the gun, and this code has to be, must be, and, by God, will be working by tomorrow morning when the office opens.

I suppose that the 'captain' analogy, above, is the strongest. In 'New Bedford' days, captains loved the sea. They were constantly amazed by the wonders that they could experience. But then, they were away from their families for months, even years, at a time. You pays you money, and you takes your chances, I suppose...

So what does this all mean? I am not sure; I remember thinking sometime in the blur of the last two weeks that I still had to work up a "Key Issues" column. Maybe I should say how programming sucks, with the hours and the hassles and the frustrations. Or maybe I should trumpet the human achievements and ingenuity that I have witnessed (and, on occasion, produced). Both are true, and both, taken separately, produce an untrue view of programming as an occupation.

I guess that my thinking about programming is this: Its a job; one that gives me a good salary for the least pain. If I wanted more money, I could sell something for eighty hours a week for BIG BUCKS. If I wanted more fun, I could work in a small hobby shop or book store. But, for me, the lines showing return and reward cross at this occupation. So be it.

I guess it comes down to what you have done with computers. I still own my Atari, and I still write an occasional game for myself. I don't bother to market them, and usually, I get the main functionality finished (all the tricky programming), before moving on to another project in another hobby. If you choose to become a programmer, its two to four years of tough college work, followed by some bone-head work until you break "into the open" and write main-stream code. Its a lot of nights in the office, an weekends down the drain.

And every so often, when a group of people viewing your work "ooh" and "ahh" like the crowd at the fourth of July, it can be well worth it.

Postscript: Yes, the project was completed in time. Time "off the clock" (I work a salaried position) is estimated at fifty hours in a week and a half.

(Editor's note: This is another fine article in this ongoing series and the newsletter staff thanks Robert for his many contributions and humor.)

RAILROAD TYCOON

Running Silicon Horses in MicroProse's 1991 Classic

A Review by Robert Raymond

With a measured pace, I walk along the dark station platform, illuminated only by the lights from the windows of a motionless passenger train standing on the nearby tracks. From one of those windows, an elderly gentleman frowns into the face of his timepiece, as if silently telling me that time is money. But I know that; I built this railroad on that principle. The dispatcher of this district has been wringing his hands, following in my footsteps. "Sir", he chances, "Ordinarily The Night Lark should have pulled out by now..."

She will stay there until I say otherwise", I fire back. "They've had a cave-in at the Harrisburg Mine, and the operations manager there promised us eighty thousand dollars if we can get equipment to him by first light. That very equipment is on its way through, and I don't want it held up by the Lark!" For good measure, I flick some cigar ash on him. He takes it like a good lackey.

Within minutes, a rumble fills this moonlit Pennsylvanian valley. A mogul-class freight engine roars through the station, pulling its usual string of empty coal hoppers, but with some additional box cars as well. The mine rescue equipment. As the lanterns of the caboose disappear into the night, I turn to the dispatcher. "In two minutes, roll the Lark." "But, Sir, the coal movement will still be in the signal block..." "Do it! The Lark won't catch that mogul, not with it running light on priority orders!" As he scurries off to do my bidding, one of my assistants lean out of the telegraph office's door. "Sir, its New York! J.P. Morgan is making a run on your stock!" With a sigh, I toss my cigar into a nearby firebucket and start towards the telegraph office so as to contact my broker to fend off J.P.'s attack. Behind me, the Lark begins to pull out of the station amid clouds of steam. I love this business!

Sid Meier's Railroad Tycoon (by MicroProse) is the older brother to the Atari favorite, Civilization. Released in 1991, it allows the player to take control of his own railroad, controlling many aspects of its construction, operation, and finance. The game itself requires 1 meg of memory to play, and runs well on a hard drive (however, my version did have some misnamed files that had to be renamed for the instillation to run correctly). I played this game for a year before getting a hard drive; I do not miss the MicroProse disk feeding frenzy that floppy drivers face when running many of this companies' games.

At the game's beginning, you are allowed to choose which game location/time you wish to play in (England in 1828, Eastern USA in 1830, Western USA in 1866, Europe in 1900). There are also four levels of play (which determine things like how much money each run makes, how well your trains handle grades (mountains and hills), etc.). You can also choose the options of Dispatcher Operations (trains must be routed and controlled), Complex Economies (you can't just sell anything anywhere), and Cut-Throat Competition (the computer attempts to kill you). You should always have the first two set on, since you are playing a railroad game, after all. More on the third option later.

Players begin with nothing more than the cash that they have raised by selling stocks and bonds in their new endeavor ($1,000,000). Even with four different scales to view the map, the player can suddenly feel overwhelmed with trying to find a location with resources, markets, room to expand, good terrain...

Once the site has been chosen, players roust their tracklayers out of their bunks and put them to work. Players can run surveys to check elevations and look at property values as they begin their network. Railroad facilities can be built and come in three sizes; depots, stations, and terminals. The larger the facility, the more it costs, but the more area it serves. A depot can pick up and deliver to sites only one square away; station, two; terminal, three.

Usually, the player can initially afford to run a line of track, linking two sites together (say, a coal mine and a steel mill). From his engine facility, the player the player may then purchase motive power from many engine types, which vary in cost, speed, and pulling power. The player then creates a schedule for the engine, which are its specific orders. The schedule tells what route the train will take and what types of cars it will pick up and deliver. For example, in the above case, we might make a schedule that tells the train to go to the coal mine, pick up three cars of coal, then go to the steel mill, and drop them off. Once you turn that train loose, it will continue following those orders automatically. In fact, you can have up to 32 trains, all running loads automatically, and the profits go right into your pockets!

But how to keep those trains from doing the dreaded "cornfield meet"? Each facility (and signal tower sites) are assumed to have passing sidings, where any number of trains can be held. Each site also has signal lights, showing green or red in each direction. When one of your trains rolls out of a station into a section of track, all signal lights leading into this occupied "block" turn red. Other trains who come up to a red signal will take the siding, and wait for the block to become unoccupied. As your traffic increases and trains start to get bottled up on sidings, you might add more signal tower sites, or even resort to laying dual trackage (which allows two trains in a block). And, it the player feels that it is safe (well, reasonably safe), he can override signals to allow additional trains into the block.

But the player is not in a vacuum. The game also has economic cycles (which dictate how quickly resources will be produced, as well as how cheaply you can build track (even computer game reviewers will be happy to work laying track in a depression)). The more you service a city, the more likely it is to grow larger (look at Chicago, which the railways made). But you don't have a monopoly; others will soon horn in on your action. Three other railroads will vie with you for money and power; they are controlled by historic figures (such as J.P. Morgan, Cornelius Vanderbilt, and the like), and each will operate like his real life counterpart in skills of building, financing, and baroning.

To compete, you can ring your broker and buy and sell stock (yours and theirs), and sell bonds. If you can swing it and purchase 60% of another railroad's stock, you now own it, and can indirectly control it (even if only to suck it

dry).

For the super-aggressive, you can engage in a rate war with another company. This is done by laying track into a facility owned by the other railroad. A rate war ensues, with the town council of the site under conflict casting votes to decide who gets sole rights into that area. Voting is directly based on the amount of service provided, so the player is forced to route many of his trains from their carefully constructed schedules to serve in the war. And since you are attempting to win the council's approval by cutting prices, all profits there are half. And of course, since 66% of the votes are needed to win the war, you might be warring for years!

There are dangers in the game. Due to shifts in industry, you might end up with an unprofitable line and go bankrupt (though you still control the railroad in receivership). And, if you grind up too many profits, your stockholders might vote you out of your position (but if you own 50% of the stock, you can laugh in their faces). And, by picking the 'Cut-Throat Competition' option, you give the computer-controlled players the ability to buy your stock (if they get 60%, out you go), and to declare rate wars on you! This isn't the train around the base of the Christmas tree.

The game proceeds over the course of a century, with towns expanding, industry growing, and bigger and bigger engines being developed. If you make it through the long haul (like Civilization, a game will take a week to get through), you are rated based on your abilities, and offered a new job, based on the result. Rankings range from Hobo to President of the United States (and I am not sure which is the good result here!)

Like all games, there are some problems: You cannot cross another railroad's line, so it is possible to get bottled up. Also, the computer player's watch every move of the stock market, and it is a real fluke if you can buy their railroads out from under them. Usually, you have to make a tender offer (you must buy ALL remaining stock at twice value), which has, on occasion, caused both railroads to go into bankruptcy (Oh yeah, Now I remember. Hobo is the bad result). Lastly, due to space considerations, modern diesels were left out of the game, so you can get stuck with early weak diesels and coal burners in 1960: so much for building a modern railroad!

But on the good side, the game is structured like Sim City in that time passes at a uniform speed, and things happen as you watch (unlike the Civilization "war-game" move-a-unit style). However, unlike Sim City, you get your money every time a train arrives, rather than in one quickly-spent lump. The result is that lots of things are going on; you can operate your line, play the stock marked, build track, and so on.

Another good point is that the game is slightly different every time. The oceans and rivers are always the same, as are the locations of mountainous regions and cities. However, the actual locations of the mountains themselves move about, the elevations are shifted, and the city size and markets are different. Resources are also fully randomized about. As I have found, it is a game that stays fresh for years. If you enjoyed Civilization, give Railroad Tycoon a try. Next time, you might take the train!

(Editor's note: Robert Raymond is a prolific writer and an avid train buff. He is an active member in a local train club and while he does use the very small guages that are almost impossible to see, he does have a very fine setup in his own right. Robert is also a frequent contributor to this newsletter and writes an ongoing column. Additionally, he is a very good programmer and is secretary of the Mid-Florida Atari Computer Club. The newsletter extends its thanks to Robert for this fine work.)

Atari Rocks at Summer CES

By Denman (Denny) Hyett

A report on the Computer Electronics Show that took place in July 1994.

As you walked into McCormick Place North(the hotbed for video games and electronic entertainment), the large Nintendo booth was to the left, Acclaim's big, loud section(obviously they felt they had to make up for in the noise department since Sega didn't have floor space this show), and just to the right was the very noticeable Atari area.

Black and Red were the colors of preference and yellow cat's eyes were everywhere. Located at the SouthWest corner of the booth was a Jag kiosk with the long awaited Jag CD churning away. Two 19 inch monitors flanked the unit and they were showing the same display as the kiosk's monitor. The Jag CD was running some of the best full motion video I've ever seen (that didn't have the assistance of an MPEG cart). This was all being done with the built-in Cinepak compression and it was much better than 3DO and light years beyond chunky Sega CD video). You could tell that it wasn't quite VHS quality(some mild pixelezation was present) but it was more than good enough to make people's jaws drop wide open. This was usually followed by the person going up and looking(to make sure the CD was really running) and then they'd grab a Jag CD info sheet. I saw this scene repeated 100s of times over the 3 days.

The continuously running FMV display consisted of: A letterbox sized sequence of the climax of "Jaws" when Roy Scheider blows the shark to bit. Next, came a full screen sequence of the tie fighter/Millenium Falcon dogfight from "Star Wars". Then, the action sequence from the conclusion of "Back to the Future 3" where Doc rescues his girlfriend with the hoverboard, the Delorean hits 88 and leaves the flame trail off the unfinished train tressle, and then the train engine dives into the ravine and explodes. Finally, it finsished up with the entire preview from the Maverick movie.

Along with the great video, the sound was tremendous(unlike the audio during FMV on the Sega CD). Not bad for a $200 CD-Rom drive. Unlike a lot of drives, it won't have some built-in wimpy amount of battery backed up ram to save games with. Instead, it uses seperate carts(something the Sega CD was supposed to have by now) for game saves, high scores, etc. Don't look for a power supply to come with it because it gets all the power it needs supplied direct from the Jag.

Behind the FMV display, the Jag CD was showing off it's built-in Virtual Light Machine program as it did some incredible graphics to all kinds of different music. If you were lucky, you might even get a demo from Jeff Minter himself. Minter mania was running wild at the show as tons of people wanted to meet the man behind Tempest 2000. I even saw someone have him sign their game manual. No, I'm not kidding.

At the SouthEast corner of the booth, Atari had a BIG tv(I'd guess 35 to 40 inches) setup with a killer sound system. They used this to show off their showcase titles. Tempest 2000 spent a lot of time here(blowing people away with it's incredible music and action). AvP got demoed and people got mindblowing looks at the awesome new fighter Ultra Vortex and the amazing polygon fest that is Iron Solider(more on these 2 killer games later). The game that owned this display for the third day was the long awaited Kasumi Ninja. People crowded around trying to get a glimpse of the very bloody beat'em up. Even though it only had half of it's characters done and was still lacking it's in-game music, people were captivated by it. Atari also had one of the coolest promo items at the show in the form of it's Kasumi Ninja headband. This beauty features the Kasumi Ninja logo across the front with the Atari fuji at one end and the Jag logo at the other end. I managed to get one on my second try (although I think the guy may have taken it easy on me).

Lynx enthusiasts should take heart in the fact that 6 Lynx units were on display but nothing new was being shown except for a limited edition title from Telegames called Bubble Trouble(which was quite good)which will be out in July. Atari is wisely putting all it's efforts into the Jag right now and will worry about the Lynx once they've got the Jag established.

Along with the first 5 games, about 20 new Jag titles were being shown (actually more people had titles but there just wasn't enough room to accomodate).

Atari Titles

Alien Vs. Predator is getting ever closer(they figure it'll be finsished up in 4 more weeks). This was a constant draw throughout the show and people were consistently blown away by it's smooth detailed graphics, the killer animation of the Aliens and the Predators, and digitized sounds straight from the movies(the motion tracker was extremely effective). You can really get into this game. I saw more than one person jump when something lunged at them. Believe the hype.

Checkered Flag has some very smooth, fast, Virtua Racing style graphics. The control still needs some work(I'm betting a driving controller might be the answer)and it only had one track(the famous...or infamous bow-tie). Actually, they're probably not even going to use that one and the final version will have 10 tracks. They're also going to be improving the sound effects and adding a pit stop with a working pit crew.

Blue Lightning was on display in early form. It was running off a cart(it's going to be a CD game) and looked pretty good. Alot of good looking texture mapping (especially on the mountains). In the final game you'll have a choice of 8 different aircraft. An A-10 Warthog for tank busting, F-14 and F-18s for dogfighting, and some European and Soviet fighters (it's a multi-national operation). The final game will also have 36 levels.

Club Drive still needs some work on it's San Francisco section and the futuristic skate park or stunt track (whichever it's going to be). The house and wild west sections do appear to be done or very close and they rock. Fast 3-d polygons, cool different viewpoints, and excellent control. The 2 player, split-screen tag game is a blast. The game has built-in support for a steering controlller and will also utilize the upcoming Jag

voice modem for two player games.

Kasumi Ninja attracted quite a bit of attention at the show for it's excellent graphics and cool fighting gameplay. By the end of a round, the ground is covered in blood and the fatalities they have so far are real attention-getters. For those who wish to screen their kids from such things, it will feature a parent programmable password to turn off the gore. In the final game, you'll gain opponent's powers as you defeat them as you make your way to the evil boss bad guy. There's going to be hidden characters and a secret Turbo mode for those who prefer their fighting faster.

Battle Zone 2000 was still very early but looked promising with a ton of texture mapped 3-d.

Also early along was a 2 player split-screen space dogfighting game tentatively titled Space War. The graphics looked very promising with texture mapped space craft that explode in a shower of polygons. I saw a lot of people really getting into this early title.

Yet another early promising looking title was an overhead driving game called Rally. It uses a slightly angled perspective and looks as good as a coin-op arcade game.

The big suprise from Atari was the awesome 3-d polygon game called Iron Soldier. 3-d graphics that are a huge jump from Cybermorph (no things pooping in the distance all of a sudden on this). You pilot a large robot warrior with your view from about his head level. There was only 1 level on display but it was something. You guide your mech through a city, complete with skyscrapers. You fight enemy robots(to see one of these walking around is a thing of beauty), artillery units, tanks, and some of[24;54H[7m--More--(52%)[9680/18560][m[20;5H<n>=set current to n, TAB=next unread, /=search pattern, ^K)ill/select,[21;9Ha)uthor search, B)ody search, c)atchup, f)ollowup, K=mark read,[22;9H|=pipe, m)ail, o=print, q)uit, r)eply mail, s)ave, t)ag, w=post[24;1H[;H[2JThread 232 of 328 (page 11): APE Online SCES Report the best ploygon attack choopers I've ever seen(which are also texture mapped). When you blast a buliding, it explodes in a rain of a ton of polgon cubes. As your robot walks, you can move your view so you can look up or down. If you look down, you'll see your beautifully animated robot legs chugging along as you step on enemy forces. The game will also support the voice modem and the Jag's network capability for 2 player action. This is going to be VERY,VERY, VERY HOT!

Beyond Games

They blew us away with Battlewheels on the Lynx and now they're going to show Jag owners what is what with their new fighting game, Ultra Vortex. UV uses digitized fighter that look incredible and have some excellent moves. Stunning photorealistic animated backgrounds, rocking techno music, and one of the most deep, evil announcer voices you've ever heard. This is also going to be whopping 32 megabits (4 megabytes for computer enthusiasts) and it shows. They're still adding characters (they're going to be doing some awesome characters using clay animation and other techniques that will knock your socks off) and they hope to be done in 2 more months. Look for hidden stuff in this as well and a wide range of fatalities (and a parental thing similar to Kasumi). This and Kasumi will both be worth buying for fighting fans. Mortal what?

Id

Wolfenstein 3d was on display in finished cart form and it looks and sounds great. Look for it in the next couple of weeks.

Doom was only being shown the first day(it kept locking up if you'd press the wrong thing) but it looked good and it was very smooth and fast. Still a lot of work to go on it but so far so good. It will also support the voice modem and we're hoping for 4 player network capability (cross your fingers).

Telegames

They were the first third party developer to release a game for the Lynx so it's not strange that they're also going to have the first third party Jag game with Brutal Sports Football. This Euro import is sort of like Speedball meets football meets rugby meets soccer meets Mortal Kombat. It's a lot of fun, especially with 2 players going at each other. Some gorgeous arcade quality graphics and the music is really good.

Telegeames was also showing an unplayable demo of a game based on a sport that you're probably not too familiar with. I'm talking about World Class Cricket. Yes, you heard me right, Cricket. Could be interesting.

Telegames will also be releasing their chess/checkers/backgammon game Ultimate Brain Games, World Class Soccer, and a gambling game called Casino Royale. They have also announced 3 more Jag games. Something called Virtuoso(?), one of the James Pond sequels, Operation Starfish, and Elite's 3-d driving game called Powerslide.

Williams Entertainment

This new company which consists of an allegiance of Tradewest and Bally Midway, had their fighting game, Double Dragon V. It's very street fighterish and shows potential. The cartoon character fighters though don't stack up well graphically against Kasumi Ninja and Ultra Vortex.

An unplayable demo of Troy Aikman NFL Football was also being shown and it looks very promising. The setup screens look great.

V-Reel

This firm was showing an unplayable demo of their football game based on the Arena Football league. It looks promising as well and they plan for it to support the voice modem.

High Voltage

High Voltage was showing an early along pinball title called Ruiner that showed potential.

They also showed an early version of their in-your-face one-on-one street basketball game, White Men Can't

Jump for Trimark Interactive. It utilizes digitized players and a field that scales as you head down the court towards the net.

Imagitec

at Imagitec are busy doing not one but two conversions of popular run and jump mario-style contests. They're handling Zool 2 for Gremlin and Accolade's Bubsy for Atari. They both look quite good so far and based on the music they did for Tempest 2000, sound expectations are quite high.

Ubi Soft

One of the true shockers at the show was Ubi Soft's stunning mario-type game called Rayman. The game has gorgeous 24 frame per second animated characters who look like they stepped out of a cartoon combined with 24-bit True Color backgrounds with multiple layers of parallax scrolling that look like they're out of a Disney film. When magazines start running their CES coverage you will be hearing about Rayman for the Jag.

US Gold

US Gold had an early version of Flashback for the Jaguar running in their own booth. I was a little disappointed at first since it looked just like the Genesis version (although the animation sequences were much faster). Especially after I caught a glimpse of the new Sega CD version with better music and new workstation generated FMV sequences(mind you they were the typical chunky Sega CD quality). I was bummed until I read in their press kit that the Jag version isn't going to be a cart but a CD. So we can expect those new animated sequences only of a much higher quality.

4Play

This is a new company who is dedicated to making high quality Jag titles that use the systems full capabilities (texture mapping, polygons, voice modem play, network multiplayer, etc.). They were running an early demo of their tentatively titled Star Battle game. The 3-d light shaded ploygon ships on display looked great (I'm especially fond of the axe-blade shaped craft called the Castrator (ouch)). The game should be very Star Raidersish.

I do have some extra info I picked up at the show but I'm gonna save that for the printed edition of APE (due early July). If you're a subscriber, keep your eye out for it. If not, check out the special deal coming up.

Magazine Watch

There's not much of interest in current issues of game magazines for Jag onwers(besides, all the really hot stuff just happened at CES).

I do have to tell you to skip the upcoming July issue of Diehard GameFan. For the first time in months, the cupboard is bare. There's a little something on the Jag version of Cannon Fodder in the Europa column but that's it.

CES Followup

This was the best CES(Atari-wise) that I ever attended. The Atari area was constantly packed with people and games like Kasumi,Ultra Vortex, AvP, Tempest 2000, Iron Soldier, and RayMan were blowing people's minds. 3rd party developers were there in force checking things out and I wouldn't be suprised if you see more big names hopping on the 64-bit bandwagon. Buyers and stores were also extremely interested in the Jag as well so don't be too suprised when it starts showing up in more and more locations. The looks on people's faces when they saw the Jag CD's FMV in action or when they spotted somebody doing a fatality in Kasumi were priceless. It's a whole new world folks.

(Editor's note: This is reprinted from the APE Newsletter, issue 7/94.)